

## **FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET**

**Meeting Date:** February 15, 2018

**Agenda Item:** Holter Lake Fishing Contest Appeal

**Division:** Fisheries

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 10 Min

◆-----◆

**Background:** Region 4 Fisheries received 10 applications for open water fishing derbies for 2018; 9 were approved as proposed or with stipulations and 1 was denied. The denied application was for a spring walleye fishing derby on Holter Reservoir. Fish management for Holter is regulated by the Upper Missouri River Reservoir Fisheries Management Plan 2010-2019. The plan specifically states that no walleye tournaments will be authorized on Holter as long as slot limits are in place. From 2000-2013 a 20 to 28-inch protective slot limit was in place on Holter (no fish between 20 to 28-inches could be harvested). In 2014 the slot limit was changed to only 1 fish over 25-inches. That restriction is still in place today. The applicant appealed the Department's decision to the Commission citing the catch and release design of the tournament, the history of fishing contests on Canyon Ferry Reservoir, and the belief that there would be no conflict with other users.

**Public Involvement Process & Results:** Goals for trophy walleye management on Holter were developed and implemented in both the 2000-2009 and 2010-2019 Management Plans. Both Plans were developed through consensus from citizen workgroups and extensive public input and Commission review and approval.

**Alternatives and Analysis:** Allowing a walleye fishing tournament on Holter while a length restriction is in place would be contrary to management goals outlined in the Management Plan. Limiting contests for walleye was a management strategy specifically addressed by two citizen workgroups and was adopted into two Management Plans by the Commission. FWP believes a catch and release walleye tournament would likely have minimal biological impact to the walleye population. There is a 20-year history of public desire to manage Holter Lake to provide opportunity to catch a trophy walleye. As such, this aspect of Holter Lake walleye management is a social issue and not biological. The argument that it is inconsistent that fishing contests are allowed on Canyon Ferry (which also has sized-based harvest restrictions) but not on Holter is incorrect, because the Management Plan specifically allows for three walleye tournaments per year on Canyon Ferry without any reference to slot limits or size restrictions.

**Agency Recommendation & Rationale:** FWP staff recommends denying the application for this walleye contest as prescribed by the current Management Plan. The current Management Plan will be under review and public process in 2018. Holter walleye can be considered at that time and public scoping can provide current perceptions of fishing contests on Holter.

**Proposed Motion:** I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission deny the appeal for the Holter Thaw Walleye Tournament on Holter Reservoir, April 14, 2018.